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Heritage of Socialist Industrialisation in the Time of Crisis – Torn between Development and Preservation

Abstract

The aim of the chapter is to present the possibilities of protection of socialist industrial heritage that has been, under the conditions of intensive restructuring during the economic crisis, practically unprotected, despite the recognised development qualities and features of the heritage. We are looking for efficient protection approaches on the case study of the industrial complex of Litostraj; i.e. an innovative and economically viable way of protection of (at least the most important) heritage features, which, indeed, have been increasingly disappearing, even though they made a major contribution to the development of contemporary Slovenia.

I Introduction

The time of economic crisis is a time when the questions of heritage protection are quickly deemed as 'a cost rationalisation opportunity', particularly because the general opinion regards the heritage as representative of costs. Generally, this means the lowering of the level of protection criteria or even the exclusion of individual structures from registered heritage lists. This is particularly evident in the case of more recent heritage categories, which have not been yet acknowledged by the general public as part of identity.

In the paper, I shall focus on the questions of industrial heritage protection from the second half of the 20th century, as a category of immovable heritage that has been during the current crisis practically left without the possibility of being provided with high protection standards, despite the fact that it represents, in the wider developmental context, an important social capital, and direct and indirect starting points for provision of different kinds of economic opportunities.

I Problem description

The main question addressed in the paper is the question of exploitation of multiple potentials of industrial heritage in the process of revitalisation of industrial sites. As in older categories of industrial heritage, we refer to the potentials of industrial trademarks, which promote their products through their own museums and the tradition of production complexes, e.g. German car companies that integrate commerce and tradition in their centres, such as BMW, Mercedes, Volkswagen, and many other companies that promote their heritage, trademark and commerce through their museum/exhibition centres. The efficiency of such approaches has created a new category of cultural tourism, i.e. industrial tourism, which has been efficiently organised and developed in Europe, not only at historical sites but in newly constructed structures as well.¹

Another segment of industrial tourism has been developing at the sites of abandoned industries, which enables the implementation of new programmes and contents at the integration of new contents; indeed, culture, education and creative industries are the activities that have often proven to be the key actors of regeneration of wider industrial areas. A case in point is the abandoned former coal mine Zeche Zollverein, which evolved into a new museum and exhibition site with an innovative and world renowned design centre, mostly because of quality new programmes and the protection of heritage that has been recognised as its key identity element.

¹ Here, the aforementioned German car industry stands out.



Fig 1: Design Museum in former Zeche Zollverein coal-mine complex in Essen. Photo: Jernej Lah.

Industrial tourism has been on a constant rise, which undoubtedly opens the possibilities for the representation of the ‘recent heritage’, i.e. the heritage of industrial complexes built during the era of socialism, irrespective of whether the structures have been abandoned or are still operating; an integrated inclusion into development processes is one of the key conditions of their preservation.

I Working method

The pursuit of the answer to the question how to most efficiently establish the conditions for an integrated protection of industrial heritage sites of the second half of the 20th century is, despite the aforementioned positive indicators, a complex task where the consideration of different factors, not only those of cultural protection, is required. In the first stage of looking for the adequate approaches, as part of the analytical part of the paper, I shall represent the key actors of regeneration processes at industrial sites, while in the continuation I shall discuss the modifications to the protection procedures. Then, in the synthesis, the case study of the Litostroj factory complex will serve as a case in point for such complexes, and the possibilities and opportunities of heritage protection, both in the light of recognition of the legitimacy of heritage protection and from the point of view of heritage potentials, as a category of social and financial capital.

I The basic characteristics of regeneration processes of industrial sites

Intensive economic changes dictate the pace of processes of spatial restructuring of industrial sites, both of those that are closing and those whose production is restructured and adapted to the current conditions.

After the intensive reurbanisation processes in the early 1990s, when Slovenia declared independence and its economy underwent intensive restructuring, the current crisis in Slovenia and the consequences of the restructuring of many economic areas, due to the transition to a market economy, present the second stage of spatial development in the restructuring process.

In the first stage the companies were restructured, some successfully, while others gradually closed down and left behind vacant former industrial properties; in the second stage we deal with different kinds of consequences.

When looking at the protection of industrial sites during the crisis, we can see that, indeed, the consequences of the crisis contributed to the preservation of some sites where the investors abandoned large-scale plans and demolitions, and rather focused on the refurbishment of the structures. This is how the structures of the Tobačna tovarna site (Tobacco Factory) in Ljubljana have been preserved. Naturally, these are short-term solutions that fail to contribute to sustainable protection and integrated preservation. As in the time after the first stage of the restructuring of the economy, today some industrial sites from the post-war period remain out of function; however, they have a major development potential due to the quality of construction and all that is needed is a dynamic protection approach, which have to promote development.

I Key factors guiding the integrated protection development process

Regarding the factors that can most efficiently guide protection processes in the frame of urban regenerations, the following starting points need to be mentioned:

1. Understanding of heritage potentials, which is particularly important for industrial sites whose potential is sadly often understood only through the lens of land value;
2. Protection of cultural values and the understanding of their significance among both the professionals and the lay community;
3. A legal protection system, which should enable the development focus of the production sites, as this is indeed their basic characteristic.

Factor 1: Understanding of heritage potentials

A very important and distinct characteristic of industrial heritage is that it is emerging as a heritage category almost always under complicated economic circumstances, when the production has stopped and the companies are often in major economic trouble, while the interest in the preservation is, along with other problems, the last on the list. Beside that processes of restructuring, the production spaces and buildings are often considered strictly in the sense of their economic value.

I am talking here with awareness that it is quite complicated to preserve structures of such scales as are those of industrial sites, but as we can see from one of the most popular examples, the Zeche Zollverein complex in Essen, the coexistence of a new programme in historic industrial structures is possible in a way where the heritage values are not endangered but rather emphasised with a new use and that the old and the new support each other in a very positive way. Consequently, new jobs and income are created also from very different programmes. i.e. where heavy industry is replaced with services, education and design production.

Factor 2: Preservation of cultural values

Regarding the acceptance of industrial heritage, it is important to emphasize its values, which have to be known to everyone involved with the specific site, because each actor can profit from the values, if they are aware of them and of the processes of inclusion of heritage values into area management.

The Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage of the International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage², as also adopted by ICOMOS, points out the main values of industrial heritage and through them we can understand and present the characteristic values of each site:

- I. The industrial heritage is the evidence of activities, which had and continue to have profound historical consequences. The motives for protecting the industrial heritage are based on the universal value of this evidence, rather than on the singularity of unique sites.
- II. The industrial heritage is of social value as part of the record of the lives of ordinary men and women, and as such it provides an important sense of identity. It is of technological and scientific value in the history of manufacturing, engineering, construction, and it may have considerable aesthetic value for the quality of its architecture, design or planning.
- III. These values are intrinsic to the site itself, its fabric, components, machinery and setting, in the industrial landscape, in written documentation, and also in the intangible records of

² The Nizhny Tagil Charter For The Industrial Heritage / July, 2003, <http://ticcih.org/about/charter/>

industry contained in human memories and customs.

IV. Rarity, in terms of the survival of particular processes, site typologies or landscapes, adds particular value and should be carefully assessed. Early or pioneering examples are of especial value.

_Factor 3: The legal protection system

The Slovenian system of legal protection of cultural heritage is made up of all legal, organisational, financial and other measures of authorities, intended for conservation of cultural heritage, its preservation and revitalisation (Pirkovič, Šantej, 2012, p. 7). This is the basis for a more integrated guidance of protective interventions, while it also provides for the commitment of owners to heritage protection, which is often the reason that they lack the interest to classify their real estate within the relevant protection groups, as these are regarded to only represent additional pressures; sadly this is how heritage is understood.

An integrated protection system, as the one known in Slovenia, must provide the opportunity to efficiently encourage the protection approaches, i.e. also through the system of legal protection of heritage, mainly as developmental and economically efficient natural encouragements at local levels, which will activate as much young educated labour force as possible; using efficient projects of cultural and tourist activities it can enable efficient and innovative approaches to integrated heritage protection, which I wish to represent based on the case study proposal.

I Case study: Litostroj City

First let us discuss the development characteristics and the current conditions of one of the most significant heritage sites of socialist industrialisation and a case study to investigate the possibility of implementation of different cultural and protection interventions at the site, which had been intensively restructured in the first stage of transition processes in the 1990s.

_Litostroj City – design of the socialist combine model

The project that left a distinct mark on the early post-war development of Ljubljana was the building of the Litostroj factory. Extensive structures provided an important witness to the conditions that guided the architectural and spatial development and, last but not least, became part of the lives of many inhabitants of Ljubljana (Ifko, 2011, p. 36-39).

The Litostroj City, as named by factory workers in post-war newsletters (Pet let Litostroja, 1952, p. 1), is not only a group of production structures, but an autonomous urban



Fig 2: Main street of the area, named Litostroj Avenue at the beginning, now Litostroj Street. Ljubljana Historical Archive.

structure with residential, cultural and education areas, formally and functionally rounding off the modernist production area of the socialist combine.

The idea of a modern industrial town in the new socialist state was directly connected to the plans of intensive post-war industrialisation and economic consolidation of the socialist state. One of the key elements of the collective story of Litostroj, along with the provision of adequate working and living conditions, was education of workers and organisation of leisure activities: own cultural events, film showings and sports (Škerjanec, 1952, p. 31). This can be regarded from different points of view: as social engagement, political control and control of people; nevertheless it is without doubt an important part of heritage, material and immaterial, alive, i.e. a part of the identity.

The project developed in several stages: The first, key stage, was the preliminary concept design of the complex with three main parts, i.e. production, residential and educational, which were all tied to the new central traffic route, in the documentation referred to as the Litostroj Avenue. The design reveals metropolitan ambitions of the designers and their vision in the project design.

The central production part, whose construction started first, was designed in a way to ensure the expansion to the north and eastern sides, which testifies to the deliberation and adaptability of the design; the design of the residential part included apartment buildings, geographically somewhat remote and tied to the city arterial road, i.e. Celovška Road. It was built in parallel to the factory, as the lack of housing for workers was a major problem. The placement of the settlement between the railway and the Celovška Road provided a logical feature of spatial urbanisation between the production area and the existing urban fibre, creating a new urbanisation platform of the Šiška suburban area.

The education part was planned in the vacant areas northwest of the factory, i.e. the Litostroj Avenue. Towards west, there existed the possibility of expansion into the hinterland of agricultural land. Later, the area was restricted by the construction of the city by-pass.

Despite being directly tied with the urban fibre of Ljubljana, it can be conceptually equalled with satellite industrial towns and defined as one of the earliest Yugoslavian socialist industrial towns.

Factory area

The industrial facilities testify to the great deal of innovation and design sensibility, which should be given some attention in the paper. This is a complex of major dimensions;



Fig 3: Litostroj was designed as factory complex in the green. Ljubljana Historical Archive.

furthermore, it was built during severe shortage of material means, but also shortage of experience and knowledge of design of heavy industry facilities. As such, it represents an important part of our modern engineering tradition; it should, in fact, be understood in the context, which should provide guidance for any future interventions in its inner area.

In my opinion, the Story of Litostrož also emphasises the key feature of Slovenian post-war architecture: despite the extremely difficult conditions and political radicalism, the architects, Edo Mihevc and Miroslav Gregorič, managed to realise many innovative construction and architectural approaches, and thus followed the then current pursuit of modernism to ensure better living conditions for as many people as possible. The spirit was also captured in the design of the factory part, referred to as the factory in the green by the author Gregorič (Gregorič, 1952, p. 13).

The setting of the structures followed the functional design of the production process, which also dictated the construction. First, a light alloy foundry in the southern-most part of the complex was erected; later on, based on the production process, a metalworking plant, a smithery, a foundry of steel castings, a steel casting plant, a storage building and a thermal station were added. These structures provided the core of the production complex. Later, other interventions and the construction of a commercial building followed, rounding off the structure of the original production complex.

In terms of construction and design, the metalworking plant built in 1947 stands out. The structure is built of reinforced concrete, the basic grid of the columns is 12 x 8 m, the total size of the structure is 168 x 126 m. It is a suspended structure that enables adjustments to the installation of several crane rails in different directions. The cranes are suspended under the load-bearing construction of the structure. Such a construction system enabled the installation of two crane runways, without the cranes obstructing each other, while the entire space below remained open. The construction was a real innovation when it was first



Fig 4: The suspended construction and roof structure of the metalworking plant. Photo: Miran Kambič.

built. The central part of the metalworking plant is covered with a Zeiss-Dywidag system roof (Gregorič, 1952, p. 12). The design is simple and adapted to the requirements of the production process. Daytime lighting is provided by large surface areas of glazed cassette concrete frames on the longitudinal sides of the structure, which are one of the first reinforced concrete construction prefabricated elements originating in Slovenia. Recently, the structure was completed for the needs of the new owner, but the basic features remain the same.

I Current situation

The transition brought about many interventions that started to intervene with the concept of the whole. Surprisingly, these interventions were fewest in the residential area, while more interventions happened in the educational area, where the vacant area was occupied by a student dorm, and, of course, within the production area itself, where the green areas were developed and thus the basic concept of a factory in the green was destroyed. A part of the area that was originally intended for expansion of production was sold in the



Fig 5: View of the Litostroj complex in 2008. Photo: Miran Kambič.

1990s and a modern technology park was built at the site. The structures that represent the key development and architecture construction achievements of the recent era are still in operation today. None of the structures are protected even though they have been acknowledged as an important witness of industrial development.

Platform for coordination of future preservation and development

When looking for an adequate development approach for the site of complex heritage, which is also relatively actively developing, we must realise that the site should be addressed in a multiple manner. In the case of Litostroj there are, in fact, three typological units, whose development was mutually interconnected, while today they are completely independent due to different engines of development.

The original concept of proper protection and interpretation activities can provide the contact point that can collectively represent their development features, while also enable an independent future development in today's development realities; this is definitely a

win-win combination.

Result: Guidelines for achieving quality protection and adaptation to development trends

Based on the situation in the complex area and the general understanding of industrialisation heritage from the socialist era, it would make sense to pursue an active promotion and awareness-raising about the significance of the heritage, as a starting point; in the next stage, the activities of heritage promotion should be represented as economic potential, while only then the legal protection measures should be implemented. Such an approach would help to create the conditions for the owners themselves to become aware of the significance of the heritage and thus become interested to inscribe the relevant sites on legally protected heritage lists.

The procedure of protection interventions should be amended in the following way:

1. Presentation of cultural protection values,
2. Test of cultural protection potentials as economic opportunities,
3. Design of procedures for legal protection of the sites.

1. Presentation of cultural protection values

Here I would like to present universal values of industrial heritage as important developmental values that should be presented in the design of protection interventions, first to the owners and potential investors, and the providers of the programmes at the site.

Industrial heritage as a social value

Industrialisation has importantly affected social relationships, and particularly during socialism it established the relationships that might be, in fact, of little interest to the inhabitants of Slovenia due to temporal proximity and political connotations, while for visitors, and particularly the next generations, it provides an important source of information about the recent past.

That is why it is important not to lose these testimonies which are an evident part of the record of the lives of ordinary men and women, and as such it provides an important sense of identity which is shown in their working places, housing, social lives and also in the intangible records of industry contained in human memories and customs.

Industrial heritage as a scientific/technological value

An integral part of architecture is its machinery – machines and structures, which enabled the production, i.e. a vital part of its presence and its testimony. Beside that the knowledge is present through plans, innovations etc.

In that context the preservation of just the structural shell is not sufficient and does not provide a comprehensive preservation and efforts have to be put in the in situ presentation of at least the most important machinery.

Industrial heritage as an aesthetic value

As mentioned in the TICCIH charter, the aesthetic/artistic value is not the key value, but in the sense of architectural, spatial and design development it presents an important value that has to be considered.

The aesthetic value of industrial architectural heritage as a developmental potential shows an important part of urban culture and the level of the quality of life developed through time, which is an important indicator of social development.

All the values provide an important culture protection potential also of socialist industrial heritage areas, not only for older industries: however, the awareness is not sufficient, as can be seen from the case in point of the Litostroj complex, to successfully market their potential and keep them from destruction in their new roles. As the examples show, only active protection and innovative approaches to the implementation of protection bring efficient protection solutions.

2. Test of cultural protection potentials as economic opportunities

One of the guiding principles of the Nizhny Tagil Charter says that an efficient protection of industrial heritage requires that programmes for the conservation of the industrial heritage should be integrated into policies for economic development and into regional and national

planning. In the context, in the second step of the process, relevant activities should be organised to enable the presentation of the heritage features to a segment of people as wide as possible, while they would themselves provide a kind of a test of economic and financial aspects of implementation of such programmes. To this end, the area in question would first become part of the range of local cultural heritage paths, with thematic paths of industrialisation, socialism, organised residential buildings etc. The response would be the first indicator of the success of the programme implementation and the starting point for design of protection/representation interventions in the future. The implementation could be taken over by entrepreneurs in the field of culture, or a system of the urban cultural tourism range.

3. Design of procedures for legal protection of the sites

The positive experience with the application of protection potentials can provide an actual basis for the launch of legal protection procedures, and along with the consideration of all the specific features of the individual industrial heritage sites, it is important to follow protection guidelines as have been most effectively summarised by the Nizhny Tagil Charter. The legal protection issues are discussed in the first three paragraphs where the basic measures are listed, which are essential for a comprehensive preservation approach, which clearly indicates the importance of integration of the heritage in economic development. The following issues have to be strictly considered in every industrial heritage site preservation:

- I. The industrial heritage should be seen as an integral part of the cultural heritage in general.
- II. Nevertheless, its legal protection should take into account the special nature of the industrial heritage.
- III. It should be capable of protecting plant and machinery, below-ground elements, standing structures, complexes and ensembles of buildings, and industrial landscapes.
- IV. Areas of industrial waste should be considered for their potential archaeological as well as ecological value.

I Conclusion

The protection processes must be efficient and comprehensive, particularly when referring to the heritage that is generally not recognised or understood as a protection category. We, the experts in the protection community, must acknowledge that legal protection is not a sufficient measure for efficient implementation of the protection itself. This has been particularly evident during the crisis. The proposed approach, even though it is a more complex one, while the activities are outside the range of usual work of heritage protection services, gives new opportunities that could in fact contribute to a more efficient protection. By inclusion of new stakeholders elaborating such programmes to be included in the cultural tourism range, this would also provide an economic potential and a direct platform for the implementation of cultural protection measures for the sites where under the existing conditions there are now practically no possibilities for an efficient implementation of cultural protection activities.